

8.11 Visual Resources

8.11.1 Introduction

Visual resources are the natural and cultural features of the landscape that can be seen and that contribute to the public's appreciative enjoyment of the environment. Visual resources impacts are generally defined in terms of a project's physical characteristics and potential visibility and the extent to which the project's presence would change the perceived visual character and quality of the environment in which it would be located.

This subsection was prepared following the California Energy Commission (CEC) guidelines for preparing visual impact assessments for Applications for Certification (AFCs). Subsection 8.11.2 documents the visual conditions that now exist in the project area. Subsection 8.11.3 evaluates the effects on the project area's landscape from project implementation. Subsection 8.11.4 discusses the significance of the potential impacts of the project. Subsection 8.11.5 discusses the potential cumulative impacts of this and other projects on the visual resources in the area. Subsection 8.11.6 summarizes the mitigation measures that reduce the project's potential impacts on visual resources to a level of less than significant. Subsection 8.11.7 identifies the laws, ordinances, regulations, and standards (LORS) that are applicable to the project. Subsection 8.11.8 lists the references used in preparation of this subsection. All figures are located at the back of this subsection.

8.11.2 Affected Environment

8.11.2.1 Regional Setting

8.11.2.1.1 Existing Conditions in the Project Vicinity

The Walnut Energy Center (WEC) project is proposed to be developed in south-central Stanislaus County at the locations indicated on Figure 1.1-1. The power generating facility site is located within the City of Turlock (City) in an area that is a mixture of industrial, agricultural, and rural residential land uses. The area primarily consists of dairy development (dairy product processing facilities, grain mills and silos, cattle grazing areas, and large fields cultivated for dairy feed crops).

The project area landscape is highly engineered in that its use for agricultural production has been made possible by land clearing and leveling and the development of drainage channels, irrigation canals, roads, railroad lines, and electric power facilities. This infrastructure is a highly visible component of the landscape. For example, immediately north of the project site are the east-west trending Union Pacific (also known as the Tidewater Southern) railroad tracks, and on the north side of the railroad tracks is the Foster Farms railroad line loop, used for deliveries to that facility. The Foster Farms silos near the railroad line loop range in height from 80 to 170 feet high. There are several other silos to the east and west of the Foster Farms' Foster Commodities – West Main silos that range in height from 80 to 140 feet high. Electric transmission lines are aligned along the streets and also cross fields in the area. Approximately 1,500 feet to the west of the project site is the Turlock Irrigation District (TID) Walnut Substation and peaking power plant.

The project area landscape can be characterized as one typical of valley dairy and agricultural industries. The landscape is not in any way unique in the San Joaquin Valley

and does not contain special scenic resources. The Stanislaus County and City of Turlock General Plans, for example, do not designate any scenic highways in this area.

Figure 8.11-1 is a map of the area that depicts the project site and the relative locations where photos were taken to demonstrate the character of the landscape in the vicinity of the project site. Figure 8.11-1 also indicates the direction that the camera was focused for each photo. Figure 8.11-2 is an aerial photo that shows the project site delineated along with the other industrial land uses denoted. In addition, Figure 8.11-2 shows the existing sources of plumes in the project vicinity. As shown, there are a variety of industrial facilities in the area, several of which produce plumes.

Photo 1 on Figure 8.11-3 shows the view looking northwest from the residence at 901 Commons Road (on the west side of Commons Road, north of Clayton Road). The photo depicts the rural agricultural character of the area that is primarily devoted to the dairy industry and its supporting activities. This is demonstrated by the grain pile, cattle grazing, and freshly cut field in the photo. The Foster Farms silos and project site are located toward the left of the photo in the background.

Photo 2 on Figure 8.11-3 shows the view looking southeast from the residence at 4407 West Main Street (on the north side of West Main Street just west of Clinton Road). This view shows the Foster Farms silos toward the left of the photo and illustrates the visual screening provided when a train is parked at the Foster Farms site on the south side of West Main Street. The Foster Farms site has a railroad loop for train deliveries. Deliveries are made to that facility 1 to 2 times per week, and it takes approximately 24 hours to unload a train. There is also an electric transmission line on the north side of West Main Street, and the conductors are shown in the top left of the photo. This is representative of the view from this residence and two other residences located on the north side of West Main Street.

Photo 3 on Figure 8.11-4 shows the view looking south and southwest from the residence on the east side of Fransil Lane at its intersection with West Main Street. This view shows Del Masso Farms, the feed mill directly south of the Fransil Lane/West Main Street intersection, and the Foster Farms silos located to the southwest on the south side of West Main Street. The project site is located to the left of the Foster Farms silos. There are several other residences on Fransil Lane to the north of the residence that offer this view. This home has the most direct and least obstructed southern view from its front yard, when compared to the other residences on Fransil Lane.

Photo 4 on Figure 8.11-4 shows the view looking south and southwest from the residence on the north side of West Main Street just east of Tegner Road. The photo depicts a dairy building toward the left of the photo; the dairy building is located on Tegner Road. The photo also shows a different view of the feed mill/silos on West Main Street than is shown in photo 3. The feed mill/silos are depicted toward the right of the photo.

Photo 5 on Figure 8.11-5 shows the view from the Ruble Road residence that is closest to the project site. The residence is located on the south side of Ruble Road at the western end of the road where it deadends. This portion of Ruble Road is a private road. This photo shows the cornfield prior to the corn being harvested. This is a view looking northwest to northeast. This residence is southeast of the project site. The project site is shown toward the left of the photo. Also shown in the photo are the Foster Farms silos directly north of the

project site and other dairy industry development toward the right of the photo. The cornfield closest to the residence would be in a buffer area, and may or may not continue to be used for crops. However, if used to grow corn, it would provide some visual screening of project features, as demonstrated in the photo by the partial visual screening of the silos. However, corn is grown only during the summer months (June to September) for about 12 weeks (and for most of that time, the corn is shorter than is shown in the photo), so the majority of the year, views of the project would be unobstructed from this location. This viewpoint is a worst case view of residences located along the south side of Ruble Road. Key Observation Point (KOP) 1 is a more representative view of the residences along Ruble Road (see Subsection 8.11.2.4).

Photo 6 on Figure 8.11-6 shows the view looking northwest to north from the residence at 3312 Ruble Road (located on south side of Ruble Road near Tegner Road). The Foster Farms silos are shown at the left of the photo; the project site is to the left of the silos. The photo also depicts the other dairy industry development (toward the center and right of the photo). A transmission line pole is in the center foreground of the photo, a cultivated field is seen just beyond the pole.

Photo 7 on Figure 8.11-6 shows the view looking northeast from the residence located on the southwest corner of Washington Road and Clayton Road. This view shows the dairy cows in the foreground (across Washington Road from the residence), a cornfield beyond the cows, and the Foster Farms silos in the background. Project facilities would be located to the right of the Foster Farms silos from this viewpoint. As shown in this photo, the cornfield provides some visual screening of the Foster Farms silos. It would also provide some visual screening of project facilities; however, because corn is only grown for 12 weeks of the year (and for most of that time, the corn is shorter than is shown in the photo), the majority of time, views of the project site would be unobstructed from this location.

8.11.2.1.2 Planning and Development Context

The planning policies that pertain to the project area are described in detail in Subsection 8.4, Land Use. The City of Turlock General Plan (City of Turlock 2002) designates the area that includes the project site as Industrial land use. As indicated above in the text and demonstrated by the photos shown in Figures 8.11-3 through 8.11-6, the area is dedicated to the dairy industry (dairy product processing) and its support uses and facilities (raising dairy cattle, feed crop cultivation, and grain processing).

The City is in the process of preparing the Westside Industrial Specific Plan (WISP). The intent of the WISP is to plan for industrial development of the industrial area in which WEC will be located (see Subsection 8.4 for more information about the WISP). Thus, the landscape in the project vicinity will remain generally industrial in the foreseeable future, with the possibility that additional dairy-related or other industrial facilities may be developed in the future.

8.11.2.2 Project Site

8.11.2.2.1 Generating Facility

The site that will be used for WEC is approximately 18 acres of the 69-acre parcel controlled by the Applicant. The project site is bounded on the north by railroad tracks, and on the west, south, and east by agricultural fields. The entire 69-acre parcel is bounded on the

north by the railroad tracks, on the east and south by agricultural fields, and on the west by Washington Road. Currently, the entire 69-acre parcel is used for crops, field corn in the summer and oats in the winter. The only structures on the 69-acre parcel are the wood power poles that will be removed and replaced with 115-kV transmission poles as part of the project. A review of Figures 8.11-9a and 8.11-13a suggests that the site does not contain any features that would be considered to be scenic resources.

8.11.2.2.2 Transmission Lines

The project includes adding an east-west trending transmission line to connect to an existing 115-kV transmission line from the project site to the existing Walnut-Hilmar 115-kV line, and adding a 69-kV transmission line south from the project site to connect to an existing 69-kV line that runs along the southern edge of the 69-acre parcel. These two lines will cross an existing agricultural (feed corn) field; the transmission line would also cross Washington Road, adding one pole on the west side to tie into the substation. The visual character of the area in which these electrical facilities would be located is seen in Figure 8.11-13a.

8.11.2.2.3 Natural Gas Line Route

The route that will be used for the natural gas line that will supply the project is described in Sections 2.0 and 6.0 and is indicated on Figure 2.1-1. This natural gas line route will go from the project site west along the railroad tracks, then south on Commons Road to Bradbury Road. As shown on Figure 2.1-1, the route follows railroad and road rights-of-way (ROW) for most of its length. The area through which this pipeline route passes is a flat, open landscape of large parcels devoted to agriculture and the dairy industry.

8.11.2.2.4 Water Lines

The routes that will be used for the recycled and potable water lines that will supply the project are described in Sections 2.0 and 7.0 and are indicated on Figure 2.1-1.

Cooling water for the facility will be delivered to the site via approximately 1.6 miles of a new recycled water line, originating at the City of Turlock's Wastewater Treatment Plant (WWTP), traversing west to the south of Spengler Way, through a transmission ROW, north on South Tegner Road to Ruble Road, west along Ruble Road, then traversing north from Ruble Road and terminating at the project site.

Until recycled water is available from the WWTP, a "bridge supply" of approximately 1,800 acre-feet per year (afy) of potable water from the City of Turlock will be used to meet WEC's water demands. This water will be provided via a new 0.9-mile pipeline connecting to an existing City water main located in South Tegner Road, east of project site. Potable water for drinking, safety showers, fire protection water, service water, and sanitary uses will continue to be served from the City's potable water system on this pipeline once the recycled water line is available. The area through which these pipeline routes pass is a flat, open landscape that is devoted to agricultural and industrial uses.

8.11.2.3 Project Site Visibility

Depending on location, views toward the power generating facility might be blocked by other structures, trees, shrubs, tall crops, or other features in the viewer's immediate foreground. From some viewpoints, only the tops of the project's taller features will be visible. From other viewpoints, where there are open views toward the site, the power generating facility has the potential to be more visible.

The boundaries of the area of potential visibility around the project are considered to be about 3 miles from the project site. This is because elements of a view that are 3 miles or more away are considered to be a part of the background, the landscape zone in which little color or texture is apparent, colors blur into values of blue or gray, and individual visual impacts become least apparent (USDA, 1973). In addition, observations on similar projects indicate that after about 2.5 miles, the facility's details become blurred and because the facility becomes a relatively small element in the overall landscape and is seen low on the horizon, it has limited visual prominence. Figure 8.11-7 is a viewshed map that depicts a 3-mile radius around the project site.

Because the gas and water supply lines would be entirely underground, they are not considered visible. It is important to note that views of the project will be blocked in some locations due to existing structures in the project area.

8.11.2.4 Sensitive Viewing Areas and Key Observation Points

To structure the analysis of the project's effects on visual resources, an identification was made of the view areas most sensitive to the project's potential visual impacts and the receptors in those areas considered to be sensitive. Typically, residents and recreationists are considered to be sensitive receptors to changes in the landscape. This is because of the potential for effects to their long-term views or their enjoyment of a particular landscape or activity. Views from these sensitive receptor locations are considered to be Key Observation Points (KOPs). Four KOPs were selected for detailed analysis for the power generating facility and one KOP was selected for analysis of the transmission lines. The KOPs that were selected from the residences (KOPs 1 through 4) were selected based on: their (1) unobstructed views of project facilities from those residences; and (2) being representative of views from several residences. Recreationists are not considered sensitive receptors in the project area because there are no recreation areas within 1 mile of the project site.

The KOPs are the "before" views of the project site. Figure 8.11-8 shows the locations where the KOP photos were taken and the direction that the camera was focused for each photo. As shown, all of the areas selected as KOPs lie within 0.8 mile of the project site and are, therefore, areas in which project features would be visible in the foreground or middleground.

For each of the KOPs, photo simulations were developed to serve as a basis for visualizing the project's potential effects from some representative locations. In evaluating the sensitivity of the viewing areas potentially affected by the project, consideration was given to distance from the project site, numbers of viewers, and the presence of residential or recreational uses. The visual analysis is not based solely on the view from these KOPs.

To respond to the CEC's requirement that an assessment be made of the visual quality of the landscapes potentially affected by the project, the discussion of the views seen from the KOPs includes ratings of the visual quality of the landscapes that they represent. These ratings were developed based on a series of in-field observations carried out in September and October 2002, review of photos of the affected area, and review of methods for assessment of visual quality. The final assessment of the visual quality of the views from each of the KOPs was made based on professional judgment that considered a broad spectrum of landscape assessment factors. The factors considered included, but were not limited to, evaluation of:

- Natural features, including topography, water courses, rock outcrops, and natural vegetation
- The positive and negative effects of man-made alterations and built structures on visual quality
- Visual composition, including assessment of the complexity and vividness of patterns in the landscape.

The landscape quality ratings expressed as a scale of six landscape quality classes are listed in Table 8.11-1. This rating system is based on the scale developed for use with an artificial intelligence system for evaluation of landscape visual quality developed by a group of landscape scholars at Virginia Tech (Buhyoff et al., 1994). The scale has a common-sense quality and is readily understandable. It defines landscape quality in relative terms, contrasting landscapes that are average in visual quality with those that are above and below average, and those that are at the top and bottom of the landscape quality spectrum.

TABLE 8.11-1

Landscape Visual Quality Scale Used in Rating the Areas Potentially Affected by the Proposed Project

Rating	Explanation
Outstanding Visual Quality	A rating reserved for landscapes with exceptionally high visual quality. These landscapes will be significant regionally and/or nationally. They usually contain exceptional natural or cultural features that contribute to this rating. They will be what we think of as “picture post card” landscapes. People will be attracted to these landscapes to be able to view them.
High Visual Quality	Landscapes that have high-quality scenic value. This may be due to cultural or natural features contained in the landscape or to the arrangement of spaces contained in the landscape that causes the landscape to be visually interesting or a particularly comfortable place for people. These are often landscapes that have high potential for recreational activities or in which the visual experience is important.
Moderately High Visual Quality	Landscapes that have above average scenic value but are not of high scenic value. The scenic value of these landscapes may be due to man-made or natural features contained in the landscape, to the arrangement of spaces in the landscape, or to the two-dimensional attributes of the landscape.
Moderate Visual Quality	Landscapes that have average scenic value. They usually lack significant man-made or natural features. Their scenic value is primarily a result of the arrangement of spaces contained in the landscape and the two-dimensional visual attributes of the landscape.
Moderately Low Visual Quality	Landscapes that have below average scenic value but not low scenic value. They may contain visually discordant man-made alterations, but the landscape is not dominated by these features. They often lack spaces that people will perceive as inviting and provide little interest in terms of two-dimensional visual attributes of the landscape.
Low Visual Quality	Landscapes with low scenic value. The landscape is often dominated by visually discordant man-made alterations; or they are landscapes that do not include places that people will find inviting and lack interest in terms of two-dimensional visual attributes.

Rating scale based on Buhyoff et al., 1994.

The environment surrounding the project site, including the area where the project linears are located, is a landscape of moderately low to moderate visual quality. It is characterized by grain storage and dairy product processing facilities and agricultural fields where grains are grown intermixed with electrical facilities (substation and transmission lines), rural residences, and open space. There are no recreation areas within 1 mile of the project site.

The existing grain storage and dairy product processing facilities in the project vicinity provide a sharp contrast to the existing natural landscape. Features are visible from several miles in all directions, and are clearly visible from aerial views. These facilities detract from the moderate visual quality landscape because of their stark difference in form, line, color, and texture, when compared to the landscape in which they exist. The presence of these facilities, however, also provides variety and interest to the landscape due to the mass, height, and contrast of them with the rural agricultural character of the relatively flat terrain.

The KOPs are described below.

8.11.2.4.1 KOP 1—Ruble Road Residence

Figure 8.11-9a depicts the view from KOP 1, a residence located on Ruble Road approximately 1,500 feet west of the Ruble Road/South Tegner Road intersection. This residence is located approximately 0.2 mile southeast of the project site. This view was selected as representative of four residences on Ruble Road. There are an estimated 20 to 30 residents on Ruble Road. This residence fronts on Ruble Road, facing north. Ruble Road is a deadend road that only provides access to the residents' homes from South Tegner Road, and also is a route for agricultural equipment. As such, traffic levels on Ruble Road are very low.

Ruble Road is shown in the lower left of the photo, and an agricultural field exists in the foreground. The Foster Farms silos are shown to the right of center of the photo, and an existing single-family residence is located toward the left of the photo's center. A water vapor plume is evident at the Foster Farms facility. The power generating facility would be located to the left of the silos, behind the residence and its buildings, from this viewpoint.

The sensitivity of this view is considered moderately low, and the view from this location can be classified as having moderately low visual quality. The textures and colors afforded by the bare ground surface and cultivated field, combined with the man-made development provide some visual interest; however, this view is not particularly inviting.

8.11.2.4.2 KOP 2—West Main Street Residence

Figure 8.11-10a depicts the view from KOP 2, a residence located on the northwest corner of Washington Road and West Main Street, at 4813 West Main Street. This residence is located approximately 0.4 mile northwest of the project site. This view was selected as representative of a few residences along West Main Street, and also of motorists traveling east and west along West Main Street. Other views from KOP 2 that are outside the frame of the photo in Figure 8.11-10a include a direct view of the existing substation to the south, a grain operation on West Main Street to the west, and a view to the east of the Moose Lodge that is located on the northeast corner of Washington Road and West Main Street.

There are an estimated 10 to 15 residents in this area along West Main Street. West Main Street has an average daily traffic (ADT) volume of 7,425 and a p.m. peak-hour volume of 745. All of these motorists are potential receptors; however, due to the limited duration of the visibility afforded to them and the fact that their focus will likely be on getting to their destinations, they are less sensitive receptors than the residents.

This residence fronts on West Main Street, a two-lane east-west trending county roadway that is a main route for travelers desiring to access either I-5 or Highway 99. West Main Street is shown in the lower portion of the photo and an electrical transmission line is shown in the photo's upper portion. Existing industrial facilities are shown in this view, and the Foster Farms silos are shown to the right of the center of the photo. Project facilities would be located to the right of the silos shown in the photo.

The sensitivity of this view is considered low, and the view from this location can be classified as having low visual quality. This is due to the limited visual interest of the topography and vegetation and the overwhelming domination of the view by industrial man-made alterations. This photo was taken from the residence's edge of property, at the roadway's edge. There are large trees in the front yard of this residence, so views from within the residence of the Foster Farms and project sites may be obstructed somewhat.

8.11.2.4.3 KOP 3—Commons Road Residence

Figure 8.11-11a depicts the view from KOP 3, a residence located on the west side of Commons Road north of the railroad tracks, at 425 Commons Road. This residence is located approximately 0.8 mile northwest of the project site. This view was selected as representative of several residences along Commons Road. There are an estimated 10 to 20 residents in this area along Commons Road. This residence fronts on Commons Road, facing east. A recently tilled field exists in the foreground of the photo. A transmission line crosses the field toward the right of the photo. In the distance (to the left of photo center) is the existing Walnut Substation and peaking power plant located on the west side of Washington Road north of the railroad tracks. To the right of the substation are the Foster Farms silos. The power generating facility site would be located to the right of the silos from this viewpoint.

The sensitivity of this view is considered moderately low, and the view from this location can be classified as having moderately low visual quality. The textures and colors and the combination of the vegetation and ground surface with the man-made structures in the photo provide some visual interest, however, the view is not particularly inviting. During certain times of the year, the field in the photo would be cultivated in crops, which would provide additional forms, lines, color, and texture; however, for a large portion of the year, the field is fallow as shown in the photo.

8.11.2.4.4 KOP 4—Washington Road Residence

Figure 8.11-12a depicts the view from KOP 4, a residence located on the west side of Washington Road north of Clayton Road, at 807 Washington Road. This residence is located approximately 0.4 mile southwest of the project site. The view was selected as representative of two residences along Washington Road. There are an estimated 5 to 10 residents in this area along Washington Road. This residence fronts on Washington Road, facing east. As shown in the photo, a residence is located across the street. Not shown in the photo is the 115-kV transmission line along the west side of Washington Road; however, the 69-kV transmission line that runs east-west is shown near the residence. Toward the left of photo center are the Foster Farms silos and other industrial development. The power generating facility would be located to the right of the silos from this viewpoint.

The sensitivity of this view is considered moderately low, and the view from this location can be classified as having moderately low visual quality. This is because of its average scenic value, lack of topography, and the lack of interesting vegetation. The landscape is one of a rural residential land use. The man-made features present in the photo are evident, but do not dominate the view, and the features are not particularly inviting.

8.11.2.4.5 KOP 5—Transmission Lines

KOP 5 (Figure 8.11-13a) is the existing view looking southeast from the southeast corner of the existing Walnut Substation and peaking power plant (west side of Washington Road north of the railroad tracks). The photo shows the existing cell tower in the distance (to the right of center of the photo). It also depicts the existing distribution line (6 wood poles) that will be replaced as part of the project. The sensitivity of this view is considered low, and the view

from this location can be classified as having low visual quality. This is because the entire landscape seen in this photo has been changed from its natural state by man-made alterations.

The transmission line on the distant horizon is located on Ruble Road and the southern edge of the 69-acre parcel. No changes are proposed to that line, but the proposed project would tie into that line via two wood poles that would cross the field in a southerly direction from the WEC site.

8.11.3 Environmental Consequences

8.11.3.1 Analysis Procedure

This analysis of the visual effects of changes that might be brought about by WEC is based on field observations and review of the following information: local planning documents, project maps and drawings, photographs of the project area, computer-generated visual simulations from each of the KOPs, and research on design measures for integrating electric facilities into their environmental settings.

Site reconnaissance was conducted to view the site and surrounding area, to identify potential KOPs, and to take representative photographs of existing visual conditions. A single-lens reflex (SLR) 35-mm camera with a 50-mm lens (view angle 40 degrees) was used to shoot site photographs.

Page-size photographs are presented to represent the “before” conditions from each KOP. Visual simulations were produced to illustrate the “after” visual conditions from each of these points, which provides the viewer with a clear image of the location, scale, and visual appearance of the proposed project. For each KOP, an “after” image was prepared. This simulation image represents the project’s appearance in the period immediately after completion of construction. The computer-generated simulations are the result of an objective analytical and computer modeling process described briefly below. The images are accurate within the constraints of the available site and project data.

Computer modeling and rendering techniques were used to produce the simulated images of the views of the site as they would appear after development of the project. Existing topographic and site data provided the basis for developing an initial digital model. The project engineers provided site plans and digital data for the proposed generation facility, and site plans and elevations for the components of the upgraded transmission system. These were used to create three-dimensional (3-D) digital models of these facilities. These models were combined with the digital site model to produce a complete computer model of the generating facility and portions of the overhead transmission and transmission line.

For each viewpoint, viewer location was digitized from topographic maps and scaled aerial photos, using 5.5 feet as the assumed eye level. Computer “wire frame” perspective plots were then overlaid on the photographs of the views from the KOPs to verify scale and viewpoint location. Digital visual simulation images were produced as a next step based on computer renderings of the 3-D model combined with high-resolution digital versions of base photographs. The final “hardcopy” visual simulation images that appear in this AFC were produced from the digital image files using a color printer.

8.11.3.2 Impact Evaluation Criteria

Analysis of the project's impacts was based on evaluation of the changes to the existing visual resources that would result from construction and operation of WEC. An important aspect of this analysis was evaluation of the "after" views provided by the computer-generated visual simulations, and their comparison to the existing visual environment. In making a determination of the extent and implications of the visual changes, consideration was given to:

- The specific changes in the affected visual environment's composition, character, and any specially valued qualities
- The affected visual environment's context
- The extent to which the affected environment contains places or features that have been designated in plans and policies for protection or special consideration
- The numbers of viewers, their activities, and the extent to which these activities are related to the aesthetic qualities affected by the likely changes

Significance criteria for impacts to aesthetic resources were developed from the CEQA Guidelines and the CEQA Checklist to evaluate the potential environmental impacts resulting from the project. The following criteria were applied:

- Would the project have a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista?
- Would the project substantially damage scenic resources, including, but not limited to, trees, rock outcroppings, and historic buildings within a state scenic highway?
- Would the project substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of the site and its surroundings?
- Would the project create a new source of substantial light or glare that would adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area?

8.11.3.3 Project Appearance—Proposed Project

8.11.3.3.1 Generating Facility

The features of the nominal 250-MW natural gas-fired combined-cycle generating facility are described in detail in Section 2.0, Project Description. Figure 1.1-2 is a plan that indicates the layout of the proposed project features on the site. Figures 2.2-2a and b provide typical elevation views. Table 8.11-2 summarizes the dimensions of the generating facility's major features.

TABLE 8.11-2
Approximate Dimensions of WEC Generating Facility's Major Features

Feature	Height (feet) ¹	Length (feet)	Width (feet)	Diameter (feet)
HRSGs				
HRSG Casings ²	65	100	24	
To platform	73		45	
To top of highest drums	80			
To top of highest relief valves and vent silencers	105			
HRSG Stacks ³	132			17
Combustion Turbine Generators (CTG)				
CTGs ⁴	20	143	39	

TABLE 8.11-2
Approximate Dimensions of WEC Generating Facility's Major Features

Feature	Height (feet)¹	Length (feet)	Width (feet)	Diameter (feet)
CTG Inlet Air Filters ⁵	47	63	37	
1				
STG ⁶	56	72	24	
STG Pedestal	36	83	43	
Pipe Rack ⁷	40	226	32	
Cooling Tower (5 cells) ⁸		271	55	37
To top of deck	42			
To top of fan shrouds	56			
Brine Concentrators ⁹	112			10
Crystallizers	42			8
Fire Pump Skid	20	16	12	
Tanks				
Recycled Water Storage Tank	35			50
Blowdown Storage Tank	35			50
Demineralized Water Storage Tank	43			34
Service/Fire Water Storage Tank	35			42
Administration/Control Building	20	118	60	
Maintenance/Warehouse Building ¹⁰	25	110	60	
Water Treatment Building	23	100	75	
Cooling Tower Electrical Building	20	50	15	
Cooling Tower Chemical Feed Area	18	66	33	
Cycle Chemical Feed Building	20	40	25	
Electrical Power Transmission Center	16	95	40	
Switchyard Control Building	18	50	24	
Switchyard		350	160	
Switchyard Bus Structures	24			
Conductor Take-Off Structures	50			
Stormwater Pond		235	235	
Gas Compressor Area		80	50	
Gas Yard		120	55	
Gas Metering Station		55	55	

TABLE 8.11-2

Approximate Dimensions of WEC Generating Facility's Major Features

Feature	Height (feet) ¹	Length (feet)	Width (feet)	Diameter (feet)
Notes:				
^a Heights are relative to tops of foundations, which are assumed to be 1 foot above the high point of finished grade, unless otherwise noted. High point of finished grade is assumed to be at elevation 87.00 feet.				
^b Excludes stack.				
^c Stack diameter shown is outside diameter. Inside stack diameter is 16 feet.				
^d Width shown is for generator noise barrier. The remainder of the CTG is approximately 24 feet wide.				
^e Length shown includes inlet air duct, which has a height of approximately 31 feet. Width shown is for filter. Inlet air duct is approximately 21 feet wide.				
^f Height shown is to top of crossover steam pipe from IP section to LP section.				
^g Dimensions shown are for the largest section of pipe rack, which runs parallel to the two HRSG's.				
^h Cooling tower heights are relative to the high point of finished grade (87.00 feet). Diameter shown is that of each fan shroud.				
ⁱ Diameter at base will be larger (approximately 17 feet).				
^j Maintenance/Warehouse Building shares a common wall with the Administration/Control Building.				

An 8-foot nonreflective chain link fence, with an additional 2 feet of barbed or razor wire, will be installed around the perimeter of the generating facility. The plant will be painted a color that will blend with the surrounding environment.

8.11.3.3.2 Construction Lay Down Area

As detailed in Subsection 2.2.15, construction of the project from site preparation and grading to commercial operation is expected to take place from the first quarter 2004 to the fourth quarter 2005 (20 to 24 months). Construction laydown and parking areas will be within an approximate 51-acre area located on the 69-acre parcel, west of the plant area. Construction access will generally be from Highway 99 to West Main Street to Washington Road to the plant entrance road, as shown on Figure 1.1-2. Materials and equipment will be delivered by truck or rail. An existing railroad and bypass track border the north side of the project site and are available for delivery of large or heavy equipment.

8.11.3.3.3 Landscaping

Project site ingress and egress would be from Washington Road. According to direction received from the City, TID proposes to install landscaping at the project site entrance.

Landscaping around the entire perimeter of the project site is not proposed. This is due to: (1) the majority of land uses surrounding the project site are compatible with the proposed site land use, (2) the installation of landscaping around the site would not be compatible with or blend with the surrounding landscape, i.e., site perimeter landscaping would appear out of character in the area, and (3) it would interfere with farming operations. The agricultural and industrial land uses adjacent to the project site already provide a buffer to the few nearby residential land uses. The cropped agricultural land would serve as a partial buffer to the Ruble Road residences to the south of the project site because it would not screen all project facilities from view. The east side of the project site is also a cropped field. To the north of the project site are the UPRR railroad tracks, and north of those are the Foster Farms facilities and rail line loop. West of the project site are agricultural fields, and northwest of the project site is the existing substation.

8.11.3.3.4 Lighting

WEC will require nighttime lighting for operational safety and security. To reduce offsite impacts of this requirement, lighting at the facility will be restricted to areas required for

safety, security, and operation. Exterior lights will be hooded, and lights will be directed onsite so that significant light or glare will be minimized. Low-pressure sodium lamps and fixtures of a nonglare type will be specified. For areas where lighting is not required for normal operation, safety, or security, switched lighting circuits will be provided, thus allowing these areas to remain unilluminated (dark) at most times, minimizing the amount of lighting potentially visible offsite.

Because of the potential for night construction, illumination that meets county, state, and federal worker safety regulations will be required during the construction period. To the extent possible, the nighttime construction lighting will be erected pointing toward the center of the construction site and will be shielded. Task-specific construction lighting will be used to the extent practical while complying with worker safety regulations.

8.11.3.3.5 Water Vapor Plumes

Plumes tend to form in the winter months, at night, and during early morning hours when the temperatures are very low and humidity is relatively high. If fog is present, plumes will not be discernible in the fog.

The height and width of the visible water vapor plume from the HRSG exhaust stack will depend on meteorological conditions. The height of the plume (whether visible or not) will be a function of the buoyant rise of the air from the HRSG exhaust stack plume. The width of the HRSG visible water vapor plume will depend on the length of time it takes for the plume to be diluted with ambient air, such that the moisture content of the air drops below the dew point, and hence the plume becomes visible.

Receptors (residents) in the area are accustomed to seeing plumes from agricultural burning and those generated at the existing nearby industrial land uses. Water vapor plumes are currently emitted by other industrial land uses in the project vicinity (see Figure 8.11-2 for plume locations). The Foster Farms feed mill, directly north of the site, uses steam to manufacture rolled oats. The process produces a water vapor plume under favorable climatic conditions. The plant operates 24 hours per day, 7 days per week, year-round. California Dairies on Tegner Avenue has a wet scrubber process that produces steam year-round from their 24-hour, 7-day-per-week, year-round operation. In addition, Del Mesa Farms on West Main Street is a feed mill that produces steam 24 hours per day, 6 days per week, year-round.

Plumes emanating from the proposed cooling tower will only occur during very cool weather with relatively high humidity, at night, or in the early morning hours. Cooling tower plumes will not be visible during warm weather. Similar to the HRSG plume, the height and width of the visible water vapor plume from the cooling tower will depend on the meteorological conditions.

Because of the character of the area and the presence of other plumes from other nearby sources, plumes that will occur at the WEC plant will not result in a significant impact on the visual character of the area. Plumes emitted from the proposed plant will not significantly detract from views of the area.

8.11.3.3.6 Transmission System

The proposed 69-kV and 115-kV transmission lines tie-in to existing lines as described in Section 5.0 and indicated on Figure 2.1-1. Figure 8.11-12a shows the existing lines that will be upgraded as part of the project, and Figure 8.11-12b shows the simulated upgraded lines.

The new transmission structures will be wood poles, or will have a finish that will turn brown over time (i.e., weathering steel). That will increase their compatibility with the existing poles that are nearby, resulting in a less noticeable change to the existing view.

8.11.3.3.7 Pipelines

The design features of the natural gas and water supply pipelines that would be built to serve the proposed project are described in Sections 6.0 and 7.0. The locations of these pipelines are indicated on Figure 2.1-1. The gas and water pipelines would be entirely buried; i.e., no aboveground structures are proposed except at the plant site within the perimeter fence.

Because the gas and water supply pipelines would be buried and the surface conditions would be restored after project construction, the pipelines would not be a source of substantial long-term changes to the visual environment.

Noticeable visual effects associated with the pipelines would be restricted to the project construction phase. During construction, the landscape of the area along the ROW would be temporarily disrupted by machinery and equipment, excavated piles of dirt, construction vehicles, construction personnel, and other disturbances associated with pipeline construction. However, these effects would be minor and temporary, and would not be significant.

8.11.3.4 Assessment of Visual Effects

8.11.3.4.1 KOP 1—Ruble Road Residence

Figure 8.11-9b is a simulated view of the project as it would appear from KOP 1. As shown, constructing the proposed power generating facility would add the facility to the left of the Foster Farms silos behind the residence and buildings shown in the photo. Its presence would alter the view from the KOP 1 residence by adding several large industrial forms into the landscape. Adding the power generating facility would not change the view substantially because, as shown in Figure 8.11-9a, the view already includes several industrial structures, does not include a scenic vista, and does not contain a unique landscape element. Further, the addition of the power generating facility to the view would not change the KOP's moderately low visual quality rating.

Due to the moderately low visual sensitivity of this view and its overall moderately low visual quality, the project's impact on this view will be noticeable, but will be less than significant.

8.11.3.4.2 KOP 2—W. Main Street Residence

Figure 8.11-10b is a simulated view of the project as it would appear from KOP 2. As shown, constructing the proposed power generating facility would add the facility to the right of the Foster Farms silos. Its presence would alter the view seen from vehicles traveling on West Main Street and from the KOP 2 residence by adding several large industrial forms. However, vehicles traveling along West Main Street would have only a fleeting view of the

project facilities due to the speed being traveled and the main focus of the driver being on the roadway and traffic conditions. As shown in Figure 8.11-10a, this view exhibits an almost entirely man-made environment that lacks variety in color and texture. The view does not contain a scenic vista, nor does it include a unique landscape element. In addition, the presence of the energy center in this view would not change the KOP's low visual quality rating.

Due to the low visual sensitivity of this view and its overall low visual quality, the project's impact on this view will be noticeable, but will be less than significant.

8.11.3.4.3 KOP 3—Commons Road Residence

Figure 8.11-11b is a simulated view of the project as it would appear from KOP 3. As shown, constructing the proposed power generating facility would add the facility to the right of the Foster Farms silos. The quality of the view is already diminished by the presence of the existing Walnut Substation, peaking powerplant, Foster Farms development, and overhead transmission line, resulting in a moderately low visual quality and sensitivity.

During the time of year when the field in the immediate foreground is cultivated, some screening of project features (and the existing electrical facilities) could be expected. However, for the majority of the year, the project facilities would be visible. Due to the distance to the project facilities, individual facilities are not clearly discernible.

This view does not include a scenic vista, and does not contain a unique landscape element. In addition, the presence of the power generating facility at the project site would not change the KOP's moderately low visual quality rating.

Due to the moderately low visual sensitivity of this view and its overall moderately low visual quality, the project's impact on this view will be less than significant.

8.11.3.4.4 KOP 4—Washington Road Residence

Figure 8.11-12b is a simulated view of the project as it would appear from KOP 4. As shown, constructing the proposed power generating facility would add the facility to the right of all of the existing industrial development shown in the photo. The view is considered to be of moderately low visual quality and sensitivity.

The placement of the power generating facility at its proposed location concentrates the industrial development into one location when seen from this viewpoint, and does not significantly degrade the view.

This view does not include a scenic vista, and does not contain a unique landscape element. In addition, the presence of the power generating facility at the project site would not change the KOP's moderately low visual quality rating.

Due to the moderately low visual sensitivity of this view and its overall moderately low visual quality, the project's impact on this view will be less than significant.

8.11.3.4.5 KOP 5—Transmission Lines

The proposed project includes two electrical project components. WEC will connect to TID's electrical transmission system via new 115-kV and 69-kV transmission lines. The new 115-kV transmission line will be approximately 1,950 feet long and will loop one circuit of an existing double-circuit 115-kV transmission line located on Washington Road. The new

69-kV transmission line will be approximately 670 feet long and will loop an existing 69-kV line into the WEC switchyard from the existing 69-kV line that runs along Ruble Road and the south edge of the 69-acre parcel (see Section 5.0, Electric Transmission). These transmission lines are discussed below.

The existing 12-kV distribution line would be replaced by a double-circuit 115-kV transmission line with a 12-kV circuit underbuilt on the same poles. The existing six wood poles would be replaced by seven taller, wood or weathering-steel poles. Figure 8.11-13b is the simulation of the new poles; the seventh pole is not visible from this viewpoint. It would be located off the right edge of the photo. In addition, one new pole would be installed on the west side of Washington Road. The poles would be made of materials that would turn brown over time, so they would be compatible with the existing wood and steel poles in the area. When comparing Figure 8.11-13a to 8.11-13b, the taller height and larger diameter of the new poles is noticeable. However, the proposed line would not significantly degrade the existing low-quality view. Therefore, no significant visual impact would result from adding the 115-kV poles.

Adding a 69-kV line south from the project site to tie in with the existing 69-kV line along Ruble Road would require the installation of two wood or steel poles across the field that is the project site, where none exist now. Installing these poles would add a new element to the landscape, but these two 69-kV poles would be subordinate to the changes to the landscape caused by the proposed generating facility and the 115-kV poles (Figure 8.11-12b). Due to the distance, the 69-kV poles appear small. No significant visual impact would result from adding these 69-kV poles to the landscape.

8.11.3.4.6 Water Vapor Plumes

Cooling tower and HRSG plumes present during nighttime hours will not be a major visual concern. During these hours, plumes would be visible only if there were sufficient natural or artificial light. Because of the measures that will be taken to reduce project lighting at the plant, any plumes that are present during nighttime hours will not be highly visible.

Because the conditions under which the water vapor plumes are likely to form are also conditions under which fog and rain are likely to be present, some of the time that plumes are present they will not be visible because of the fog and rain. An additional variable that needs to be considered in evaluating the visual implications of the project's water vapor plumes is that many of the daylight, nonfog, nonrain hours when plumes are present will occur during the winter at times when the sky is overcast. Under overcast conditions, the contrast of the plumes with the sky will be low, and because of the low degree of contrast, the visual prominence of the plumes will be substantially reduced.

At times when the larger plumes created by the project will be present during nonfog, nonrain daylight hours, they will have the potential to be seen in the project vicinity. However, their visual prominence will be greatest in the foreground zone (0.25 to 0.5 mile from the project site). Few residences are located within that zone. A contextual factor that needs to be considered in evaluating the visual implications of the project's plumes is that industrial facilities in the project vicinity are already a source of visible plumes.

8.11.3.4.7 Light and Glare

WEC's effects on visual conditions during hours of darkness will be very limited. As indicated in Subsection 8.11.3.3.4, some night lighting will be required for operational safety and security. High illumination areas not occupied on a regular basis will be provided with switches or motion detectors to light these areas only when occupied. At times when lights are turned on, the lighting will not be highly visible offsite and will not produce offsite glare effects. The offsite visibility and potential glare of the lighting will be restricted by specification of nonglare fixtures, and placement of lights to direct illumination into only those areas where it is needed.

Lighting that might be installed to facilitate nighttime construction activities will, to the extent feasible and consistent with worker safety codes, be directed toward the center of the construction site and shielded to prevent light from straying offsite. Task-specific construction lighting will be used to the extent practical while complying with worker safety regulations.

8.11.3.4.8 Construction Period Impacts

The 51-acre construction laydown and parking area will be located on the WEC project parcel to the west of the plant area. The parked vehicles, equipment, and stored materials in this area will be visible from Washington Road. Although the vehicles, equipment, and stored materials in the laydown area will be readily visible and will change the appearance of the site to some degree, it will not substantially reduce the site's visual quality. Once the plant structures start being put into place, they will begin to screen views of the laydown area. After development of the generating facility's structures is completed, all traces of the laydown area will be removed and the surface of the laydown area will be restored.

8.11.4 Impact Significance

Visual effects of the project that will be significant under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) are identified below. The identification of these impacts has been structured by applying the criteria set forth in Appendix G of the state CEQA guidelines. The CEQA guidelines define a "significant effect" on the environment to mean a "substantial, or potentially substantial, adverse change in any of the physical conditions within the area affected by the project, including objects of historic or aesthetic significance (14 CCR 15382)." The five questions related to aesthetics that are posed for lead agencies and the answers to them are:

1. Would the project have a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista?

No. There are no designated scenic roads or vista points in the project viewshed. In addition, as the analysis of the views from the KOPs has established, the project would not affect any landscapes of more than moderately low visual quality, and any effects to the existing visual quality of landscapes in the area would not be substantial.

2. Would the project substantially damage scenic resources, including, but not limited to, trees, rock outcroppings, and historic buildings within a state scenic highway?

No. This question does not apply to WEC because none of the project facilities fall within the boundaries of a state scenic highway or other important scenic resource.

3. Would the project substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of the site and its surroundings?

No. The site itself is a flat parcel devoted entirely to large-scale production of irrigated row crops and does not contain any important visual resources. The site is located in an industrial/agricultural area where the dairy industry is prominent and row crops are grown to support that industry. In addition, nearby are transmission lines and the Walnut Substation and peaking power plant. Nearby views in which the project would be seen vary in visual quality from low to moderately low. Although the presence of the project would change the character of nearby views toward the site to some degree, there will be little, if any, change in the visual quality of the views. Although the views toward the site will be changed, they will not be changed in a way that could be construed as being substantially degraded.

Project plumes would not substantially degrade the existing visual character of the site and its surroundings because the general landscape setting is one in which visual plumes of various origins are already present.

4. Would the project create a new source of substantial light and glare that would adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area?

No. As described in Subsection 8.11.3.3.4, project light fixtures will be restricted to areas required for safety, security, and operations. Lighting will be directed onsite; it will be shielded from public view, and nonglare fixtures and use of switches, sensors, and timers to minimize the time that lights not needed for safety and security are on will be specified. These measures should substantially reduce the offsite visibility of project lighting.

Any lighting that might be installed to facilitate nighttime construction activities will, to the extent feasible and consistent with worker safety codes, be directed toward the center of the construction site and shielded to prevent light from straying offsite. Task-specific construction lighting will be used to the extent practical while complying with worker safety regulations. With these measures, lighting associated with the project construction and operation will not pose a hazard or adversely affect day or nighttime views toward the site.

8.11.5 Cumulative Impacts

The City is preparing the WISP to encourage industrial development of this part of the City. At this time, no major projects are known to be in the planning stages at present for the area in the immediate vicinity of the project site. As a consequence, the area around the site can be expected to maintain its current appearance for the reasonably foreseeable future. Given this context, the assumption is that in the foreseeable future there will be no other developments in the immediate vicinity of the WEC site that would have effects that WEC would combine with to create cumulative visual resource impacts.

It is possible that other dairy and/or industrial developments could be constructed in the project vicinity in the future. Each project would contribute to a change in the landscape character of the area and would be reviewed separately to determine its compatibility with the landscape and consistency with the WISP or County regulations and ordinances. For

these reasons, the proposed project would not result in significant cumulative impacts on visual resources. Its contribution to cumulative visual resource impacts would not be significant.

8.11.6 Mitigation Measures

8.11.6.1 Generating Facility

The mitigation measures listed below have been included in the project design to reduce the generating facility's impacts on visual resources:

Careful site planning and landscape design, including the following:

- The City has suggested that placement of landscaping at the entrance to the project site would be all that was needed to comply with the City's design requirements.
- Minimal signage and construction of project signs using nonglare materials and unobtrusive colors. The design of any signs required by safety regulations will need to conform to the criteria established by those regulations.
- Minimization of lighting to areas required for safety, security, or operations, and shielding of lighting from public view to the extent possible. Timers and sensors will be used to minimize the time that lights are on in areas where lighting is not normally needed for safety, security, or operation.
- Direction and shielding of lighting to reduce light scatter and glare. Highly directional light fixtures will be used.

8.11.6.2 Transmission Lines

The following mitigation measures for the transmission lines have been included in the project design:

- The poles will be constructed of wood or steel to create a trim profile that will coordinate with the existing transmission facilities. Steel poles will consist of the appropriate materials so that the finish will turn brown over time.
- The poles will be treated, as necessary, to maximize their visual integration into the backdrop.
- Insulators will be nonreflective and nonrefractive.

8.11.6.3 Pipelines

The following mitigation measures have been included as part of the project proposal to reduce the visual impacts of the proposed pipelines:

- After construction, ground surfaces will be restored to their original condition, and any vegetation that had been removed during the construction process will be replaced with like-kind vegetation.
- All aboveground gas facilities will be located at the project site inside the project fence.

8.11.7 Laws, Ordinances, Regulations, and Standards

8.11.7.1 Introduction

This subsection describes the LORS relevant to the visual resource issues associated with the WEC project. No federal, state, or regional visual resource LORS exist. However, visual resource and urban design concerns applicable to the project are addressed in the Stanislaus County General Plan, the Stanislaus County Zoning Ordinance, the City of Turlock General Plan, and the City of Turlock Zoning Ordinance.

As indicated in the Land Use analysis (Subsection 8.4), the generating facility site is located within the city limits of the City of Turlock. The project's natural gas line, water line, and electric transmission lines are located in the City and unincorporated Stanislaus County.

Table 8.11-3 lists the City and County plans and ordinances that are pertinent to the project elements. The specific provisions of each plan or ordinance that have potential relevance to the project are identified in Subsections 8.11.7.2 through 8.11.7.5.

TABLE 8.11-3

Laws, Ordinances, Regulations, and Standards Applicable to Walnut Energy Center Visual Resources

LORS	Purpose	AFC Section Explaining Conformance	Agency Contact
City of Turlock General Plan	Describes policies for land use, housing, public facilities and services, transportation, open space and conservation, city design, noise, safety, and implementation for the plan area.	Subsection 8.11.7.2	Ms. Dana McGarry Senior Planner Community Development Department 156 S. Broadway, Suite 120 Turlock, CA 95380 209-668-5640
City of Turlock Zoning Ordinance	Establishes zoning districts governing land use and requirements for buildings and district improvements.	Subsection 8.11.7.3	Same as above
Stanislaus County General Plan	Describes policies for land use, traffic circulation, conservation and open space, noise, safety, and housing within the plan area.	Subsection 8.11.7.4	Mr. Bob Kachel Senior Planner Department of Planning and Community Development 1010 10th Street, Suite 3400 Modesto, CA 95354 209-525-6330
Stanislaus County Zoning Ordinance	Establishes zoning districts governing land use, allowable uses, and requirements for buildings and district improvements.	Subsection 8.11.7.5	Same as above

8.11.7.2 City of Turlock General Plan

The generating facility site is located within an existing industrial area within the city limits of the City of Turlock, and is, therefore, subject to the provisions of the City of Turlock

General Plan. The project site is designated Industrial (I) according to the General Plan. A portion of the project's natural gas line, water line, and electric transmission lines are also located in the City. The provisions of the City's General Plan that are applicable to the project are summarized and evaluated in Table 8.11-4.

TABLE 8.11-4
Conformity of Walnut Energy Center with the City of Turlock General Plan

Provision	Discussion of Project's Conformity to Provision
Industry Implementing Policy 2.5-h: Design industrial development to minimize potential community impacts adversely affecting residential and commercial areas in relation to local and regional air quality and odor, adequacy of municipal service, local traffic conditions, visual quality, and noise levels.	Consistent. TID proposed a site location that would be consistent with surrounding land uses, thus maintaining the visual quality of the project vicinity.
Industry Implementing Policy 2.5-i: Buffer industrial and heavy commercial areas from adjacent residential, commercial, and recreation areas.	Consistent. TID proposes to buffer the project on its southern side from the nearby residences on Ruble Road by landscaping.
City Design Element Policy 7.4-d: Enhance the visual attractiveness of the community by providing attractive streetscapes, particularly along major expressways, arterials, and collector streets.	Consistent. TID proposes to install landscaping at its energy center entrance on Washington Road.
City Design Element Policy 7.4-h: Subject all development projects and capital improvements within view of a designated Gateway Route to mandatory design review procedures.	Consistent. TID will submit its proposed project to the City for design review purposes because West Main Street is considered a Gateway Zone according to the City's General Plan.

Source: City of Turlock, 2002.

8.11.7.3 City of Turlock Zoning Ordinance

According to the City of Turlock Zoning Ordinance, the project site is zoned I (Industrial). The provisions of the ordinance that are applicable to the project are summarized in Table 8.11-5.

TABLE 8.11-5
Conformity of Walnut Energy Center with the City of Turlock Zoning Ordinance

Provision	Discussion of Project's Conformity to Provision
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TABLE 8.11-5

Conformity of Walnut Energy Center with the City of Turlock Zoning Ordinance

Provision	Discussion of Project's Conformity to Provision
<p>9-2-109 Landscaping and irrigation:</p> <p>The purpose and intent is to establish landscaping regulations that are intended to:</p> <p>(a)(1): Enhance the aesthetic appearance of development in all areas of the City by providing standards relating to quality, quantity, and functional aspects of landscaping and landscape screening.</p> <p>(a)(2): Increase compatibility between residential and abutting commercial and industrial uses.</p> <p>(a)(5): Protect public health, safety, and welfare by minimizing the impact of all forms of physical and visual pollution, controlling soil erosion, screening incompatible land uses, preserving the integrity of neighborhoods, and enhancing pedestrian and vehicular traffic and safety.</p>	<p>Consistent. TID proposes to install landscaping at its energy center entrance on Washington Road.</p>
<p>9-2-118 Screening of mechanical equipment:</p> <p>Exterior mechanical equipment, except solar collectors and residential utility meters, shall be screened from view on all sides. Equipment to be screened includes, but is not limited to, heating, air conditioning, refrigeration equipment, plumbing lines, duct work, and transformers.</p>	<p>Consistent. Mechanical equipment will be located within the fenced plant site and will be screened by slats in the surrounding chain link fence.</p>
<p>9-3-403 Industrial district property development standards:</p> <p>Height: No maximum height.</p> <p>Landscaping: see Subsection 9-2-109 Landscaping and Irrigation.</p>	<p>Consistent. There is no height limit in the I District (McGarry 2002).</p>

Source: City of Turlock, 2000; McGarry, 2002.

8.11.7.4 Stanislaus County General Plan

A portion of the project's natural gas line, water line, and electric transmission lines are located in unincorporated Stanislaus County on land that is designated Agriculture according to the Stanislaus County General Plan. The provisions of the County's General Plan that are applicable to the project are summarized and evaluated in Table 8.11-6.

TABLE 8.11-6

Conformity of Walnut Energy Center with the Stanislaus County General Plan

Provision	Discussion of Project's Conformity to Provision
<p>Land Use Policy Two: Land designated Agriculture shall be restricted to uses that are compatible with agricultural practices, including natural resource management, open space, outdoor recreation, and enjoyment of scenic beauty.</p>	<p>Consistent. The project is consistent with this provision because the project's proposed land use is compatible with the surrounding land uses.</p>
<p>Conservation/Open Space Element Goal One:</p>	<p>Consistent. The project is consistent with this provision</p>

Encourage the protection and preservation of natural and scenic areas throughout the County.

because the project area is not considered to be a natural or scenic area.

Source: Stanislaus County, 1994.

8.11.7.5 Stanislaus County Zoning Ordinance

According to the Stanislaus County Zoning Ordinance, the area that includes the gas line, water line, and transmission line is zoned Agriculture (A-2-10, A-2-40). The provisions of the ordinance that are applicable to the project are summarized in Table 8.11-7.

TABLE 8.11-7

Conformity of Walnut Energy Center with the Stanislaus County Zoning Ordinance

Provision	Discussion of Project's Conformity to Provision
21.20.030 C Tier Three (2): The uses listed below are not directly related to agriculture but may be necessary to serve the A-2 District or may be difficult to locate in an urban area. Tier Three uses may be allowed when the planning commission finds that, in addition to the findings required under Section 21.96.050, the parcel on which such use is requested is not located in one of the County's "most productive agricultural areas."	Consistent. The project's gas line, water line, and transmission line would not be located in areas that are considered to the County's "most productive agricultural areas"; therefore, the proposed use would be allowed. The linear facilities will be located within existing utility ROW or in or adjacent to roadways.
(j) Facilities for public utilities and communication towers	
21.08.020 Uses (C): For purposes of this title, facilities for public utilities include, but are not limited to, electrical substations, communication equipment buildings and towers, service yards, gas regulator stations, meter lots, pumping stations, which are accessory to existing gas or oil pipelines, and water wells; and such uses are permitted in A-2 and all R districts; provided, that such use is demonstrated in connection with the approval of a use permit, to be properly located without detriment to or in conflict with the agricultural or residential usage of property so zoned within the vicinity. Public utility transmission and distribution lines, both overhead and underground, are permitted in all districts without limitation as to height, but metal transmission towers are subject to all yard requirements as other structures. However, routes of proposed electrical transmission lines (including height and placement of towers), shall be submitted to the planning commission for review and recommendation prior to the acquisition of rights-of-way therefore, when such lines are not within a public street or highway.	Consistent. The proposed transmission lines are considered permitted uses in the A-2 district, and there is no height limit requirement.

Source: Stanislaus County, 2000.

8.11.7.6 Summary of Project's Conformity with Applicable LORS

The project is consistent with applicable laws, ordinances, regulations, and standards related to visual resource issues. Although the mechanical equipment associated with the project would not be completely screened from view, it would be screened to the degree that it is feasible.

8.11.8 References

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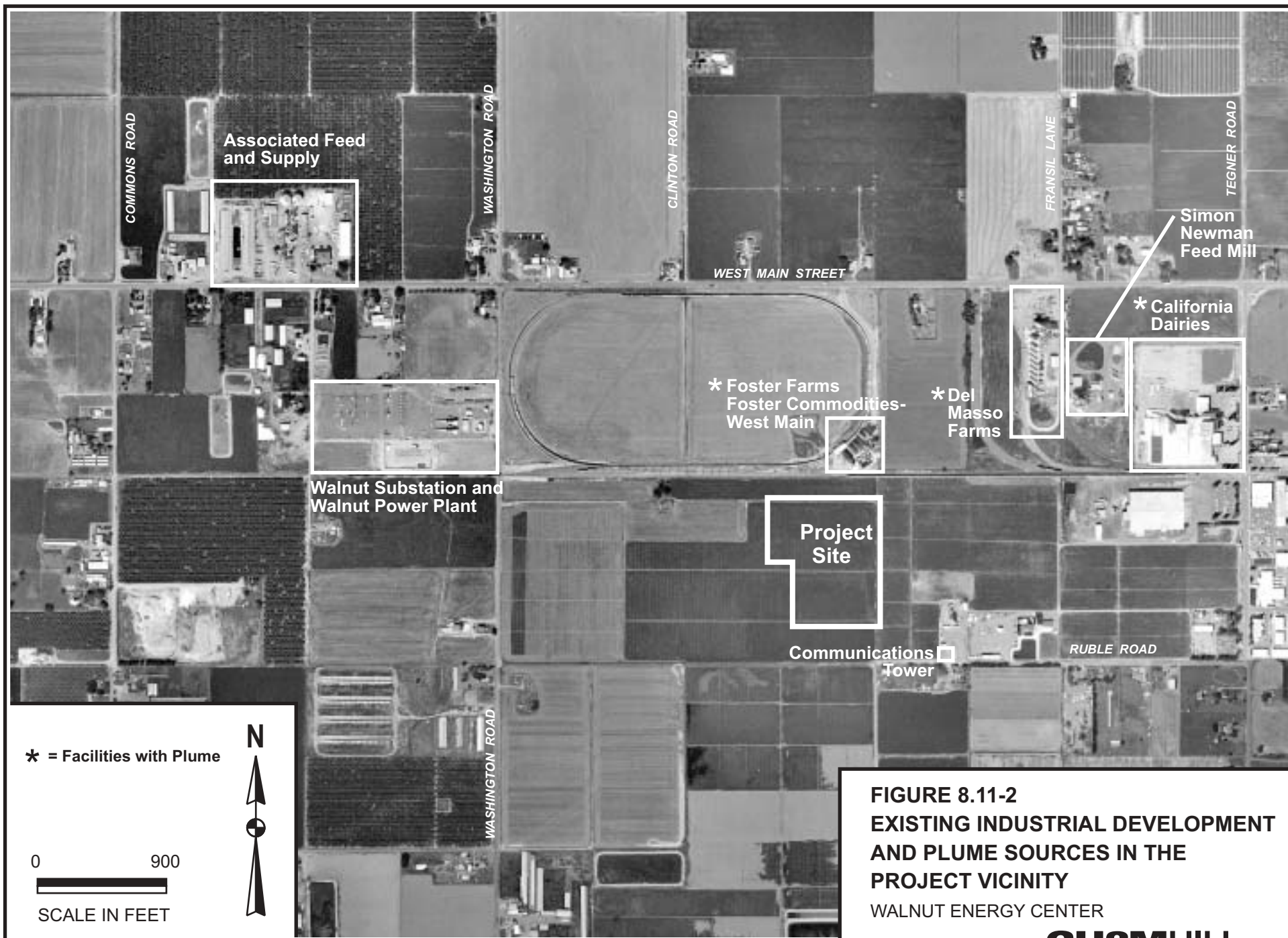
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1. Looking northwest from the residence at 901 Commons Road. The photo depicts the rural agricultural character of the area that is primarily devoted to the dairy industry and its supporting activities. The Foster Farms silos and project site are located toward the left of the photo in the background.



2. Looking southeast from the residence at 4407 W. Main Street (on the north side of W. Main Street just west of Clinton Road). This view shows the Foster Farms silos toward the left of the photo and illustrates the visual screening provided when a train is parked at the Foster Farms site on the south side of W. Main Street. Train deliveries are made to that facility 1-2 times per week, and it takes approximately 24 hours to unload a train.

FIGURE 8.11-3
LANDSCAPE CHARACTER IN THE
PROJECT VICINITY (photos 1 and 2)

WALNUT ENERGY CENTER

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3. Looking south and southwest from the residence on the east side of Fransil Lane at its intersection with W. Main Street. This view shows the feed mill and silos located on the south side of W. Main Street.



4. Looking south and southwest from the residence on the north side of W. Main Street just east of Tegner Road. The photo depicts a dairy building toward the left of the photo, and a different view of the feed mill and silos than is shown in photo 3 toward the right of the photo.

FIGURE 8.11-4
LANDSCAPE CHARACTER IN THE
PROJECT VICINITY (photos 3 and 4)
WALNUT ENERGY CENTER



5. Looking northwest to northeast from a residence on Ruble Road. This residence is located at the western end of Ruble Road on a portion of road that is designated as private. This residence is southeast of the project site and is the closest residence to the site. This view shows the project site prior to harvest (corn field toward the left of photo), the Foster Farms silos, and other agricultural industries toward the right of the photo. As the corn grows, it would provide some visual screening of project features. However, corn is grown only during the summer months (June to September) for about 12 weeks (and for most of that time, the corn is shorter than is shown in the photo), so the majority of the year, views of the project would be unobstructed from this location.

FIGURE 8.11-5
LANDSCAPE CHARACTER IN THE
PROJECT VICINITY (photo 5)
WALNUT ENERGY CENTER



6. Looking northwest to north from the residence at 3312 Ruble Road (located on south side of Ruble Road near Tegner Road). The Foster Farms silos are shown at the left of the photo and the other dairy industry development is shown toward the center and right of the photo.



7. Looking northeast from the residence located on the southwest corner of Washington Road and Clayton Road. This view shows the dairy cows in the foreground, a corn field beyond the cows, and the Foster Farms silos in the background. Project facilities would be located near the Foster Farms facilities from this viewpoint. As shown in this photo, the corn field provides some visual screening of the Foster Farms facilities. It would also provide some visual screening of project facilities; however, because corn is only grown for 12 weeks of the year (and for most of that time, the corn is shorter than is shown in the photo), the majority of time, views of the project site would be unobstructed from this location.

FIGURE 8.11-6
LANDSCAPE CHARACTER IN THE
PROJECT VICINITY (photos 6 and 7)
WALNUT ENERGY CENTER

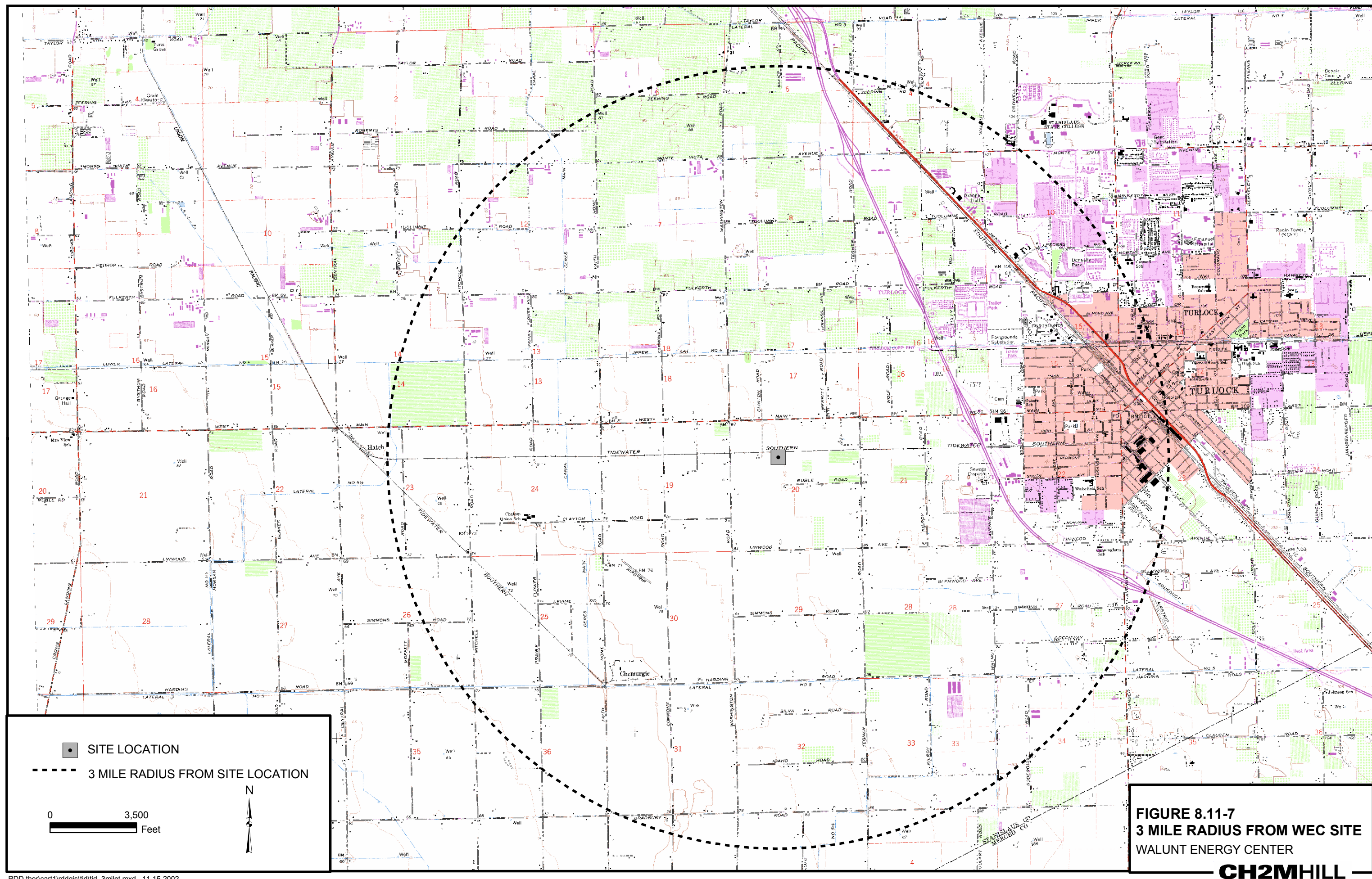






FIGURE 8.11-9a
KOP 1: EXISTING VIEW OF PROJECT
SITE FROM RUBLE ROAD RESIDENCE
WALNUT ENERGY CENTER



FIGURE 8.11-9b
KOP 1: SIMULATED VIEW OF PROJECT
SITE FROM RUBLE ROAD RESIDENCE
WALNUT ENERGY CENTER



FIGURE 8.11-10a
KOP 2: EXISTING VIEW OF PROJECT SITE
FROM 4813 W. MAIN STREET RESIDENCE
WALNUT ENERGY CENTER



FIGURE 8.11-10b
KOP 2: SIMULATED VIEW OF PROJECT SITE
FROM 4813 W. MAIN STREET RESIDENCE
WALNUT ENERGY CENTER



FIGURE 8.11-11a
KOP 3: EXISTING VIEW OF PROJECT SITE
FROM 425 COMMONS ROAD RESIDENCE
WALNUT ENERGY CENTER



FIGURE 8.11-11b
KOP 3: SIMULATED VIEW OF PROJECT SITE
FROM 425 COMMONS ROAD RESIDENCE
WALNUT ENERGY CENTER



FIGURE 8.11-12a
KOP 4: EXISTING VIEW OF PROJECT SITE
FROM 807 WASHINGTON ROAD RESIDENCE
WALNUT ENERGY CENTER



FIGURE 8.11-12b
KOP 4: SIMULATED VIEW OF PROJECT SITE
FROM 807 WASHINGTON ROAD RESIDENCE
WALNUT ENERGY CENTER



FIGURE 8.11-13a
KOP 5: EXISTING VIEW OF TRANSMISSION
LINE FROM WALNUT SUBSTATION AND
PEAKING POWER PLANT
WALNUT ENERGY CENTER

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FIGURE 8.11-13b
KOP 5: SIMULATED VIEW OF TRANSMISSION
LINE FROM WALNUT SUBSTATION AND
PEAKING POWER PLANT
WALNUT ENERGY CENTER